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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SU CD  
SUBJECT: MINAWI ON JEM DYNAMICS, ARAB-GOVERNMENT CONFLICT

Classified By: CDA R. Powers, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Meeting with AID Mission Director and Poloff on June 3, Senior Assistant to the President and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Minni Minawi discussed the shifting power dynamics within the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the increasing disaffection among Arab tribes toward the Sudanese Government. According to Minawi, two factions had emerged within JEM. One, led by chairman Khalil Ibrahim, continued to harbor ambitions of regime change in Khartoum. Another, led by Secretary General Bahar Tahir Abugardo, was open to negotiations with the Sudanese Government. Minawi said that President Deby had shifted his support for JEM to Abugardo's faction as part of Chad's efforts to ease tensions with Sudan. (Note: The split between Ibrahim and Abugardo is not based on clan differences as both hail from the same Zagawa Kobe clan. End note.)

¶2. (C) Minawi also noted the rise in intra-Arab violence in Darfur. He said that Arab militia leader Musa Hilal had fled his traditional stronghold of Kebkabiya on June 1 after he was implicated in the death of a local sheikh. Minawi attributed this event to a growing conflict between the Sudanese Government (and its proxies) and the Arab tribes of Darfur. Members of these tribes had served in the Government-sponsored Janjaweed but were now defecting and had begun to confront the Government. Minawi cited the example of a recent "Janjaweed" attack on Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) soldiers in Kass and Wadi Salih. He claimed to have spoken to representatives of another Arab militia which had refused Government orders to launch attacks in Chad. When the Government then attempted to disarm this militia, the Janjaweed fighters launched a counter-attack on the SAF.

¶3. (C) Underscoring that the Sudanese Government is incapable of disarming the Arab militias by force, he said that the Arab tribes were beginning to consider their options: 1) Continue to implement Government orders, which may be counter to the tribes' interests, 2) Accept Government-led disarmament, which would leave them vulnerable to banditry and attacks by other tribes, or 3) Join the SLM. While optimistic that the Arab tribes would choose an alliance with the SLM, Minawi did not specify whether such a decision would entail active confrontation against the government or participation in a political process. "This could be the final bloodletting of Darfur," said Minawi.

¶4. (C) Comment: Minawi's sources inside JEM are well-placed. He claimed, for example, to be receiving information on Ibrahim's location from a Zagawa contact with the JEM chairman in Chad. Minawi visited Kebkabiya in mid-May, which could represent a new SLM interest in coordinating with disaffected Arab tribes and former militia members. End

comment.  
POWERS